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Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

CONNECTIONS

*A Network of Christ-Centered, Outwardly-Focused, Faith-Growing
Communities for the Sake of the World*

October 2026



Gathering for Discernment and Community at the August Candidacy Retreat

by Deacon Aimee Elles, Bishop's Associate for Candidacy and Education

On August 24-25, 2026 candidates for ministry, committee members, and synod leaders gathered together at [Lutherhill Camp](#) in La Grange, Texas, for the annual candidacy retreat. Held primarily in the retreat center and Carby Chapel, the gathering brought together those discerning calls to rostered ministry with the leaders who accompany them throughout the candidacy process.

The retreat served as an important milestone for candidates at various stages of candidacy, including Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval. Through panel conversations, learning sessions, worship, and fellowship, participants were invited to reflect deeply on God's call and the vocation of ministry. Candidates met with members of the candidacy committee while also building relationships with one another and engaging in honest conversations about leadership in the church.

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Embodying the 3Cs: Willie Langdji Visits the Gulf Coast Synod

by Karen Elsen & Rev. Cassandra Nagle

Greetings from the CAR Team! The August 7-17 visit from Willie Langdji, ELCA Regional Representative for West and Central Africa, was productive in all the ways we could have hoped. As we've reflected on our time together, and started to look forward to all that is to come, we'd like to share with you how Willie's visit embodied the 3Cs of our synod – **Connection, Communication, & Compassion.**

We were blessed by Willie's willingness to dedicate ten days to his time in Texas, which allowed him to visit and **connect** with four churches, instead of the one or two as he had visited in previous years. Willie was warmly welcomed at Faith-Bellaire, St. Paul-Columbus, Our Savior's-College Station, and Christ the King-Houston. Each of his visits was well-attended by the congregation, and his time at each church allowed attendees to ask questions and gain a better idea of Willie's role in the churches in the Central African Republic. Frank, a staff member at Our Saviour's-College Station and a member of the CAR Team, reflects on Willie's presentation...

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First Month in Mexico with Young Adults in Global Mission

by Gavin Gillar

I am currently on a year-long journey in Mexico through Young Adults in Global Mission, a program with the ELCA. YAGM is a year of accompaniment, faith formation, and service in a foreign country for any young adult aged 21 to 35. I arrived in Mexico about a month ago, and have been loving every day of this journey.

After leaving home, I had a week of orientation in Chicago. There were 20 of us in total- 4 going to Cambodia, 5 going to the United Kingdom, 4 going to Argentina/Uruguay, and 7 including me going to Mexico. One of the first things that we did at orientation was to create a covenant, a list of rules that we as a cohort agreed to follow during orientation. There were rules you might expect- rules about being respectful and assuming the best in others, but there was one rule that we found particularly important- “Be Sponge”.

After arriving in Mexico, we had two weeks of in-country orientation. Once again, one of the first things we did was write a covenant, this time for our YAGM year and for the 7 of us together. And once again, we wrote down “Be Sponge”. Then, later, we had to make personal covenants, and sure enough “Be Sponge” made the list.

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Being Good Neighbors

In the suburbs or a downtown neighborhood, it only takes a moment to meet a neighbor on the front stoop or over a backyard fence. And it's easy to grow those relationships as well. Turn on the sprinklers for the kids or roll the grill out to the sidewalk if there isn't a big back yard. But when neighbors are siloed in churches and separated by interstate miles, it's tougher to develop a sustaining sense of community. Still, some folks at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Kenner, St. Mark Evangelical Church in Metairie and Bethlehem Lutheran Church New Orleans are determined not to let I-10 asphalt and concrete stop them from becoming better neighbors and supporting nonprofit work they all believe in.

Leading up to "God's Work Our Hands" Sunday on Sept. 13, Bethlehem, CTK, and St. Mark parishioners collected personal hygiene items, and by the end of service that day, volunteers faced thousands of donated products that they turned into hundreds of personal hygiene bags. A few days later, CTK

delivered the bags to Grace at the Greenlight, a remarkable nonprofit that cares for New Orleans homeless in many ways – starting with a hot breakfast 365 days a year – and distributing hygiene bags. This will not be the last time our churches work with Grace, an amazing nonprofit that Pastor Laura learned about from one of her contacts with local social workers.

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Feeding Ministries in Our Synod

by Lori von Heyking, Connections Team Chair

Over the past few months, Connections has highlighted several feeding ministries across the Synod, including Sandwich Saturdays at Holy Comforter

ministries across the Synod, including Sandwich Saturdays at Holy Comforter in north Houston and The Community Table at Bethlehem Lutheran in New Orleans. These features grew out of Bishop Tracey's listening tour last year, when many congregations excitedly shared how their feeding ministries had positively affected their communities. Their stories inspired other congregations to explore starting similar ministries and to connect with experienced congregations for guidance.

In response, the Synod's Connections Team asked congregations with feeding ministries to share how they serve their communities. So far, 16 congregations have reported 31 feeding initiatives, as many generously offer more than one ministry. These initiatives include...

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Lisa's Pieces: Creation Care Tips from the Synod Lutherans Restoring Creation Team

by Lisa Brenskelle

The mission of [Lutherans Restoring Creation](#) is to promote incorporation of care for creation into the full life and mission of the church, working in five areas: worship, education, discipleship, building & grounds, and public ministry/advocacy.

[Read more...](#)

October & Early November Creation Care Events

- [Learning the Language of Creation book discussion group](#) – Ongoing on Tuesdays thru October 6, 6 p.m., online
- [Living the Change](#) – Ongoing thru November, dates/times individually scheduled, online

SCHEDULED, ONLINE

- [Climate Solutions 101](#) – Ongoing on Thursdays thru October 15, 6 p.m., online
- [Faithful Resilience: A Study on Climate Resilience for Faith Communities](#) – Ongoing on Mondays thru October 19, 6 p.m., online
- [You know about pet rescue, but have you heard about food rescue?](#) – Sunday, October 4, 4 - 5:30 p.m., online
- [Native Plant Pollinator Garden Refresh](#) – Saturday, October 10, 10 a.m. – noon, Christ the King Lutheran Church, 2353 Rice Blvd., Houston
- [Justice Advocacy Event](#) – Sunday, October 11, 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., Christ the King Lutheran Church, 2353 Rice Blvd., Houston
- [Lutherans Restoring Creation Bike Team rides Bike Around the Bay](#) – Saturday, October 17 & Sunday, October 18, Galveston & Baytown
- [Worship in the Wild](#) – Saturday, October 17, 9 – 11 a.m., Hermann Park, 6001 Fannin, Houston
- [A Multi-Faith Justice Advocacy Rally](#) – Sunday, October 18, 3 p.m., online
- [Drawdown Roadmap](#) – Thursdays, October 22 – November 12, 6 p.m., online
- [Lutherans Restoring Creation Bike Team rides Park to Port](#) – Saturday, October 24, 8 a.m., Hermann Park, Houston
- [Fall 2026 Interfaith Environmental Stewardship Event](#) – Sunday, October 25, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m., Willow Waterhole Greenspace, Houston
- [Hope from the Sky](#) – Sunday, October 25, 6 p.m., online
- [Cool Congregations Cohort](#) – monthly on 4th Monday, 7 p.m., online
- [The Path of Hope: A Study on Climate Action for Faith Communities](#) – Mondays, October 26 – November 16, 6 p.m., online
- [Bike to Church/Transportation Alternatives Sunday](#) – Sunday, November 1, 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., Christ the King Lutheran Church, 2353 Rice Blvd., Houston

- [Faith Communities + Civic Engagement = It Matters](#) – Sunday, November 1, 3 p.m., online
- [Distribution of Devotional for Use during the U.N. Climate Conference](#) – Saturday, November 7, 6:45 – 7:15 p.m. & Sunday, November 8, 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., Christ the King Lutheran Church, 2353 Rice Blvd., Houston
- [Lutherans Restoring Creation runs Run in the Park](#) – Saturday, November 14, 8 a.m., Hermann park, 6001 Fannin, Houston
- [Justice Advocacy Event](#) – Sunday, November 15, 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., Christ the King Lutheran Church, 2353 Rice Blvd., Houston
- Interfaith Prayer Vigil during the U.N. Climate Conference – Sunday, November 15, 3 p.m., Hermann Park, Houston

Contact gcs.lrc@gmail.com for details on any of these events.



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